

Community Development Diversity Action Plan 2007

Community Development is the combination of five distinct work groups: Economic Development, Housing Services, Neighborhood Enhancement, Rio Salado and Redevelopment/Special Projects; resulting in a diverse and dynamic department. With this diversity comes the knowledge, strength and flexibility to address numerous challenges tasked to our department. At the same time, each work group brings its own embedded culture and norms which serves each group very effectively and must be respected and maintained.

The Community Development Diversity Action Plan is intended to be a flexible document which can (and should) change and evolve to provide guidance on issues facing the department or City. A cross departmental team was created to discuss issues facing the department and to ultimately draft the plan. The team conducted a survey of the department asking employees to respond anonymously to questions related to intradepartmental communications, diversity and hiring practices. Based on survey responses and subsequent discussions with the team, this Diversity Action Plan focuses on intradepartmental communications and hiring practices, thereby coinciding with the City-wide diversity issues of Inclusion and Equity, Impartiality, Healthy Networks, Fair Promotions, and Solutions.

Intradepartmental Communications

The Community Development Department is comprised of five distinct work groups, each of which serve similar, yet distinct customers and activities. Even with workloads and ever changing priorities, it is a paramount to maintain communication between the work groups about what each is doing, while additionally educating the entire department about the function and priorities of the workgroup themselves.

It is recommended that formal and informal communication between the groups be facilitated in every means possible including:

- Weekly updates via e-mail from the department manager which include current issues or projects facing the department as well as human interest items about department employees.
- Regular meetings between the department head and representatives of SEIU and TSC (or successor organization)
- Workgroup meetings will be open for any departmental employee to attend, thus facilitating greater understanding of workgroup-specific issues.
- Semi-regular departmental potluck lunches. These workday events generally occur with a theme (ie Cinco de Mayo or Superbowl), where departmental staff gather in an informal environment. Participation is optional, however, turnout has been substantial at events held to date. Departmental ice-cream socials have also been very popular as a way of bringing the department together. These informal gathering have proven invaluable in team building and bonding between the work groups and should continue.

- Quarterly Department Staff Meetings to function on a formal basis and may include presentations from individual work groups, special guest presentations, awards and recognition, and/or open dialog about a given departmental issue.

Hiring Practices

Hiring practices are generally seen as a primary flashpoint for diversity issues, and based on discussions with employees, Community Development is no exception. The department should approach this issue with a blend of a fair and equitable recruitment and interview process and emphasize personal accountability by department employees to be prepared and perform to the best of their abilities within the process. These issues can be addressed through the following means:

- Forward, via e-mail, City-wide job postings to all department employees.
- Encourage job shadowing to allow employees to understand various jobs within the department and to aid in career planning for employees. Such shadowing should only be conducted with supervisor approval and contingent upon work load. Senior department management will need to create a department-wide policy for the fair and equitable implementation of this program.
- Encourage employees to partake in City-sponsored interview preparation classes. Further, consider training some departmental employees as interview coaches or mentors; thus bringing that skill set in-house making it more accessible and convenient to employees.
- Ensure that interview panels for Community Development positions strive to include gender and ethnic diversity and should include one panel member from outside the department.
- Encourage the use of Individual Development Plans as a tool to identify individual career goals and facilitate the achievement of those goals for the betterment of the employee, department and City.

Department employees are encouraged to consider employment opportunities throughout the City organization, and be provided the same assistance and support for opportunities that may be in other City departments.

In conclusion, the Community Development Department will continue to mesh its five work groups together, drawing strength and innovation from this collaboration. The department's Diversity Action Plan will evolve with the department itself, and will reflect the department's commitment to diversity and an outstanding work environment.